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THE LADY AND THE SCRIBE; SOME FURTHER
REFLECTIONS ON ANĀHĪT AND TĪR

There seems general agreement among students of Zoroastrianism — the evidence being indeed very strong — that in Western Iran veneration of the spirit of the planet Mercury, under the Old Persian name of Tiri, became influenced by the Elamite-Babylonian worship of Nabū, a great god, and himself lord of Mercury. Mercury is not a conspicuous planet, and is unlikely to have been greatly regarded by the ancient Iranians, who would not have identified its two diurnal appearances as those of one celestial body. Nevertheless, Tiri, like Nabū, came to be venerated as a great god, and his feast was eventually one of the very few to be kept also by the Persians' non-Iranian subjects. There is moreover a clinching piece of evidence in that Nabū was worshipped as the divine Scribe, patron of writing, an art alien to the Iranians and little respected by their priests; and Tiri too came to be invoked as patron of scribes, which could not possibly be part of his original Iranian conception¹.

It is further generally accepted (since the textual and liturgical evidence is incontrovertible) that Tiri, thus aggrandised, was in due course identified with Zoroastrian Tištrya, *yazata* of the star Sirius; and that in spite of the problems which this created on the astronomic plane, a link between the two in worship became an established fact². The day named for Tištrya in *Yasna* 16 was renamed in general usage for Tiri/Tīr; but all religious services solemnized on that day, and throughout the month of Tīr, contain the Avestan invocation of Tištrya, while the festival widely celebrated as Tīragān is known locally among Zoroastrians as the Jašn-e Tīr-o Teštar. Since both Nabū (and hence Nabū-Tīri) and Tištrya were thought of as rainbringers, the worship of Tištrya-Tiri could be harmoniously conducted through this great annual rain-festival, and through seasonal supplications for rain.

¹ On the identification see most recently Gh. Gnoli, "Politique religieuse et conception de la royauté sous les Achéménides", in: *Commémoration Cyrus II (Acta Iranica 2)*, 1974, 132-135; W. Eilers, "Sinn und Herkunft der Planetennamen", in: *Sb. d. Bayerischen Akademie d. Wissenschaften*, 1975, Nr. 5, München 1976, 43-44; M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, *Hb. d. Orientalistik* I.viii.1.2.2A, Vol. II, 1982, 31-33.

² See Boyce, *op. cit.*, 204-206.

The identification nevertheless brought strange elements into Zoroastrianism: worship of a planetary divinity, although the errant planets (other than sun and moon) are not honoured in the *Avesta*; veneration of a great divinity by a name unknown in the *Avesta*; respect for a patron-god of the long-despised and alien art of writing. These troublesome anomalies make it likely that the association of Tīri with Tištrya was not made without some opposition among the Zoroastrian orthodox; and that it could only have been carried through with strong support. The only support powerful enough to have constrained the whole Zoroastrian community, in east as well as west, was that of the Achaemenian Great King; and the Achaemenian period is the likely time for the identification to have been made, with the Persians, having embraced Zoroastrianism, reluctant to give up their own by then beloved worship of Tīri.

The case thus seems established for this triple association of divinities: Nabū-Tīri-Tištrya; and there is strong evidence for a parallel triple association of Ishtar, the Lady of Venus (like Nabū, worshipped in Elam and Babylon, and indeed far and wide), *Anāhiti, the Old Persian spirit of the planet Venus, and the Avestan river-goddess Arədvī Sūra Anāhita. Matters here, however, are more complex, and remain stubbornly controversial. The main reason for this lies with the names of the Iranian divinities concerned. Whereas Tīri and Tištrya, despite their association, keep distinct Middle Persian names, as Tīr and Teštar, the planetary and river goddesses tend to merge their identities under the single Middle Persian appellation Anāhīt/Anāhīd; though the Avestan divinity, as *yazad* of waters, is distinctively named Ardvīsūr in the Pahlavi books. Even there, in this role, she is however on occasion identified as Anāhīt, much as Tištrya is identified as Tīri, e.g. 'Ardvīsūr who is Anāhīt, father and mother of the waters' (*ardwīsūr ī anāhīt, pid ud mād ī ābān*)³. The ambiguities of Pahlavi make it possible, however, to omit the relative particle here, and to read simply 'Ardvīsūr Anāhīt', even though this is contrary to general Pahlavi usage; and there are scholars who maintain that in any case Middle Persian 'Anāhīt' simply represents Avestan Arədvī Sūra Anāhita, and that there is no need to postulate a syncretism with any foreign divinity. This position is taken generally by those who accept the theory of a trifunctional organisation of the Zoroastrian pantheon. Since in historic times 'Anāhīt' is a great *yazata*, she has been given prominence under this theory, and has been

³ *Greater Bundahišn*, ed. and tr. by B. T. Anklesaria, Bombay 1956, III.17.

categorised as a trivalent being, exercising all three functions, in that she bestows wisdom, martial success and fertility. This trivalency, it is held, attached to her already as proto-Indo-Iranian *Sarasvatī⁴; and so there is reluctance to accept an interpretation that attributes her diversity of powers to an enlargement of her concept in much later times, and through alien influences.

This interpretation, though it has the attraction of a certain simplicity, leaves important questions unanswered. It is clearly proper for a river-goddess to grant fertility, and there is an ancient mantic link between water and wisdom; but why should such a being bestow victory in battle? Why, in fact, should she be, from her origins, trivalent? To deduce this from her threefold epithets of 'moist, mighty, pure' seems decidedly forced; nor does it help to cite evidence from her Avestan hymn, for this, like all other Younger Avestan texts, is plainly a composite work that has grown during centuries of oral transmission. Since 1858 it has been recognized that certain verses in it describe the goddess in terms of a cult statue⁵; and these can hardly have been composed before the late fifth century B.C. Other verses are apparently borrowed from Aši, goddess of fortune, in whose *yašt* very similar ones occur⁶. This borrowing presumably took place when 'Anāhīt' had come to enjoy enormous popularity, under royal favour; but this popularity in itself poses a question. Water was unquestionably of immense importance to the ancient Iranians; but 'the Waters' are themselves worshipped in the Zoroastrian pantheon, and there are other, individual water divinities. Why should it have been Arədvī Sūra Anāhita who, as Anāhīt, became so strikingly dominant, overshadowing even the great Ahura, *Vouruna Apām Napāt? Further, why, after generations of resistance by the ancient Persians to the cult of images, as practised by all their Near Eastern neighbours, should an image-cult have been introduced into Zoroastrianism in the veneration of this particular divinity? The worship of a water-goddess is not one that lends itself with

⁴ For Arədvī's identification as *Sarasvatī see H. Lommel, "Anahita-Sarasvatī", in: *Asiatica, Festschrift F. Weller*, Leipzig 1954, 405-413; and cf. G. Dumézil, *Tarpeia*, Paris 1947, 56; J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *La religion de l'Iran ancien*, Paris 1962, 189. W. W. Malandra, *An introduction to ancient Iranian religion*, University of Minnesota Press, 1983, 119, appears to dismiss this widely accepted identification as 'unconvincing', but he gives no reasons, and his treatment of the question is ambiguous.

⁵ See F. Windischmann, *Die persische Anahita oder Anaitis* (*Ab. d. königlich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 8), München 1858, 118-119.

⁶ For reasons to suppose that the borrowing was by Arədvī from Aši, and not *vice versa*, see Boyce, *Hist. Zoroastrianism* I, 1975, 72-73.

any particular readiness to the use of statues. Then how did Anāhīt acquire the title *bānū(g)*, 'Lady', which became so much hers that it could be used even without her name, as an instantly recognizable cult epithet? In Asia Minor this title was rendered by the Greek equivalent *κύρια*⁷, and was even, it seems, lent there by 'Anaitis' to Artemis of Ephesus, from whom otherwise she was the cultic borrower⁸. No Avestan equivalent is used of any Zoroastrian *yazata*; but 'Lady' was the regular title of great Ishtar. Finally, if 'Anāhīt' were purely a river-goddess, how is it that in Middle Persian her name was used for Ishtar's planet, Venus (as *anāhīt ī abāxtarī*), and that, as Nāhīd, it is still so used in Persian today?

None of these questions can be satisfactorily answered if it is assumed that Old Persian Anāhita, Middle Persian Anāhīt, simply represents Arədvī Sūra Anāhita; but the problems they pose can all be resolved if the interpretation is accepted that the Iranian *yazata* came to be identified with Ishtar, and so added to her own considerable importance the greatness, and also the attributes (notably as goddess not only of love but of war) of that far-famed Semitic divinity, who was regularly venerated with cult-images. This interpretation, put forward over half a century ago⁹, has since found confirmation in the identification with Ishtar of the goddess Mylitta, to whom Herodotus said the Persians had learnt from the Assyrians and Arabians to sacrifice¹⁰.

The question still remains, was there a Persian goddess who constituted a bridge between the Semitic and Avestan divinities, as Tīri did between Nabū and Tištrya? The answer would appear to be, inescapably, yes; for it is wholly improbable that the ancient Persians, worshipping the spirit of Mercury, should not also have venerated that of Venus, much brighter and more conspicuous in the sky. But although in the case of these two beings the Persian priests seem to have yielded to the influence of Babylon, so greatly superior in astronomic lore, they appear in general to have preserved their own religious tradition faith-

⁷ See P. Herrmann, *Ergebnisse einer Reise in Nordostlydien*, Wien 1962, 59, no. 54; L. Robert, *Rev. numismatique* 18, 1976, 48, n. 107; CRAI, 1978, 282.

⁸ *Inscr. Brit. Museum* DLXXVII, see W. Ramsay, *The cities and bishoprics of Phrygia*, Oxford 1895-1897, I, 90, 150 (who pointed out the Semitic character of the title).

⁹ By H. Gressmann, *Archiv f. Religionswissenschaft* 20, 1920, 35ff., 323ff.

¹⁰ See Stephanie Dalley, *Revue d'Assyriologie* 73, 1979, 177-178. On the vexed further question of a link between 'Anāhīt' and the Mesopotamian goddess Nana(i), much worshipped in Elam, see, briefly, M. L. Chaumont, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* I, 1008-1009. Ishtar and Nana had their separate shrines and cults; but since both were worshipped as goddesses of Venus, it seems possible that the Persians regarded them as one, see Boyce, *Hist. Zoroastrianism* II, 30-31.

fully, with its characteristic forms of worship. Hence, though there are traces of the influence of foreign gods on Iranian ones, there is no evidence of the admission of such gods in their own right, and under their own names, to the Iranian pantheon. (The contrast is striking with Elam, which readily welcomed alien divinities.) One may therefore reasonably suppose the existence of a Persian goddess of Venus, whose concept was enlarged through assimilation to that of Ishtar, the Lady — an assimilation of which most of her Persian worshippers probably remained quite unaware.

What then was the name of this Iranian divinity? From Hellenistic times the Greeks knew Iranian 'Anāhīt' as Anaitis; and since an etymologically puzzling OP form *Anāhiti had been reconstructed from MP Anāhīt, the Greek one was explained as due to itacism for *Anaeitis, with *ei* for OP *i*. Then it became established that in Middle Persian (and probably already in late Old Persian) the loss of a final vowel lengthened a preceding short 'i'¹¹, hence Anāhīt could evolve regularly from *Anāhiti, an etymologically acceptable form closely related to Avestan Anāhita. Now it is further argued that Greek renderings of the final syllables of OP words are too erratic to be relied on. There are instances where Greek 'i' reproduces Persian 'i', e.g. ἄζαραπάτις for *āzarapatiš¹², Παρύσατις, Παρυσάτις for *paru.šiyātiš (if Oppert's etymology is correct¹³); but there are others where the Greek is inconsistent, e.g. Ἀμιστρις beside Ἀμιστρης¹⁴, -ης being a frequent Greek rendering of Persian final -a. Therefore, it is suggested, the OP name may in fact have been *Anahita, i.e. identical with the Avestan final epithet of Arədvī. From this (which is indeed a possibility that can probably never be excluded) it is then argued that if there were only one Iranian name or epithet, presumably there was only one Iranian divinity, i.e. Arədvī, with no need to postulate a Tīri-like intermediary between her and Ishtar. This further point, however, by no means follows, and not only for the reasons already indicated. *Anāhita* 'pure' is not an epithet exclusive to Arədvī even within the Zoroastrian pantheon; and

¹¹ See M. Back, *Die sassanidischen Staatsinschriften* (Acta Iranica 18), 1978, 70.

¹² See O. Szemerényi, "Iranica V", in: *Monumentum H. S. Nyberg II* (Acta Iranica 5), 1975, 354-392, esp. 386, n. 279.

¹³ See F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, Marburg 1895, repr. 1963, 1976, 244.

¹⁴ See R. Schmitt, "Die Iranier-Namen in den Persai des Aischylos", in: *Proceedings of the 13th International Congress of Onomastic Sciences*, 1978, Warsaw 1982, 378-379. Cf. also R. Schmitt, "Die Iranier-Namen bei Aischylos", in: *Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Klasse, Sitzungsberichte*, 337. Bd. (Veröffentlichungen der Iranischen Kommission, herausgegeben von Manfred Mayrhofer, Bd. 6), Wien 1978, 50-51.

this being so, there is no reason to suppose that this same adjective was not freely used of divinities by the ancient Persians also, coming to be applied by them in particular, substantivised as the 'Pure One', to the spirit of the clearly shining planet, for whom it forms a highly appropriate name. If the ancient Persian goddess of Venus were thus called *Anāhita, this would plainly have created a very easy bridge to her identification with the Avestan Arədvī Sūra Anāhita; and it would explain what is otherwise yet another problem, why the river-goddess should have come to be generally known, not by her first, distinctive epithet, Arədvī, exclusive to her, but by her third one, which she shared with other divinities. This problem is of course also explained if, on the basis of the consistent Greek form, one assumes a slightly variant OP *Anāhiti. The evidential force of the loss of the distinctive 'Arədvī' tends to be obscured by the fairly general practice of referring, for brevity's sake, to the Avestan *yazata* herself simply as 'Anāhita', a usage for which there is no textual support.

The assumption of a triad, Ishtar-*Anāhiti(-a)-Arədvī Sūra Anāhita, offers a perfect and therefore satisfying parallel to that of Nabū-Tiri-Tištaya; and it elucidates a whole series of otherwise perplexing problems, providing a unity of explanation for complex phenomena. Moreover, for these two sets of identifications, place, time, motive and means are all comprehensible: the place, Persia; the time, the pre-Achaemenian and Achaemenian periods; motive, the Persians' desire, as Zoroastrians, to continue the non-Zoroastrian worship of two great and popular divinities; means, the immense power of the Persian Great King. Thereafter, the complex divinity 'Anāhīt' had a dominant part in Zoroastrianism: Lady of waters, Lady of Venus, patron-goddess of kings, giver of victory in battle and boons to the needy; and her worship became so widespread and deeply-rooted in Western Iran that she is the only Zoroastrian *yazata* still to be venerated there by Muslim and Zoroastrian alike, honoured (though euhemerized as a Sasanian princess) even in the twentieth century as 'the Lady of the land', 'the Lady of Persia'¹⁵.

¹⁵ See M. Boyce, 'Bibi Shahrbanū and the Lady of Pārs', *BSOAS* 30, 1967, 30-44. On the many putative representations of Anāhīt in Persian art see C. Bier, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* I, 1009-1011.

GHERARDO GNOLI

A NOTE ON THE MAGI AND EUDEMUS OF RHODES

The evidence of Eudemus of Rhodes concerning the doctrine of the Magi, which has come down to us through the Ἀπορίαι καὶ λύσεις περὶ τῶν πρώτων ἀρχῶν of Damascius¹, is well-known. The latter, a Neo-Platonic philosopher, took refuge in Ctesiphon at the court of Xusrau Anūšīrwān after the closing of the Academy in Athens by Justinian in 529². He there recorded the testimony of Eudemus as to the dualistic doctrine of the Magi, pointing out that it too presupposed a sort of ἀρχή, Time or Space, from which the two opposing principles were ultimately derived³. The importance of this evidence is clear. Since it is commonly acknowledged as one of the most ancient sources documenting Zurvanite dualism, as a consequence Zurvanism itself should no longer be seen as a late evolution of Mazdean or Zoroastrian dualism⁴, but rather as belonging to the Achaemenian era.

Certain scholars⁵ have cast doubt on the authenticity of Damascius' explicit attribution of the report to Eudemus. They have seen it as an attempt by the Neo-Platonic philosopher to place the speculations of the Magi regarding the pre-existence of an undifferentiated entity under the authority and the responsibility of the Aristotle's disciple⁶. However, while no one can deny the Neo-Platonic colouring of the information

¹ Damascius Diadochus, *Dubitationes et solutiones in Platonis Parmenidem*, ed. by C. A. Ruelle, Paris 1889, 125 bis, 322. Cf. C. Clemen, *Fontes historiae religionis persicae*, Bonn 1920, 95; J. Bidez and F. Cumont, *Les Mages hellénisés*, Paris 1938, II, 69f.; R. C. Zaehner, *Zurvan, A Zoroastrian Dilemma*, Oxford 1955, 447.

² A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, 2nd edition, Copenhagen 1944, 428; R. N. Frye, *The history of ancient Iran (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, III. Abt., VII. Teil)*, München 1984, 330.

³ H. S. Nyberg, "Questions de cosmogonie et de cosmologie mazdéennes", in: *JA* 219, 1931 (1-134, 193-244), 103f.; U. Bianchi, *Zamān i Ōhrmazd, Lo zoroastrismo nelle sue origini e nella sua essenza*, Torino 1958, 101.

⁴ Bidez - Cumont, *op. cit.*, I, 18, 62ff.; G. Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans*, Stuttgart 1965, 149.

⁵ J. Scheftelowitz, "Neues Material über die manichäische Urseele und die Entstehung des Zervanismus", in: *ZfI* 4, 1926 (317-344), 343; O. G. von Wesendonk, *Das Wesen der Lehre Zarathuštrōs*, Leipzig 1927, 14.

⁶ F. Wehrli, in *RE*, Suppl. XI, Stuttgart 1968, coll. 652-658.